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RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 7695
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMCSUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAHLA/HOMELAND SECURITY CENTER WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY 0109
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 007097

SIPDIS

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DEPT FOR NEA/ARPI (BSHUKAN, RJACHIM, SWALKER), DRL/NESCA
(OZKAN), INL/HSTC, G/TIP (PATEL, TAYLOR)

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TAGS: [AORC](#) [ELAB](#) [FBI](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: SAUDI REACTION TO SENTENCING OF HOMAIDAN AL-TURKI

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Gfoeller for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (S/NF) The August 31, 2006, sentencing by a Colorado court of Homaïdan Al-Turki to 28 years to life imprisonment for sexually assaulting his Indonesian maid has provoked calls for a boycott of U.S. products and the return of Saudis studying in the U.S. Some Saudi contacts even fear that this anger could encourage acts against Americans both inside and outside the U.S., including terrorist actions. Saudis in the U.S. and in the KSA agree with Homaïdan's claim that he received an unfair trial that focused on his religion and reflected U.S. prejudice against Saudis, Arabs, and Muslims in general. The press reports that even SAG officials have called the sentence imposed on Homaïdan "harsh" and vowed to take the case to the "highest levels," presumably to reduce the punishment. However, there has been little, if any attention on the victim. Resentment of the U.S. could increase when Homaïdan faces a federal trial in October or if his appeal of the August 31 sentence is unsuccessful. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

¶2. (SBU) Homaïdan Al-Turki and his wife Sarah Khonaïzan were arrested in November 2004 and then again in 2006, first for immigration violations, then for mistreatment of their illiterate 24 year-old, Muslim Indonesian maid. Homaïdan was also charged with sexually assaulting the maid. On August 31, Homaïdan was sentenced to 28 years to life imprisonment by the Arapahoe County (Colorado) District Court after being convicted of three felonies and three misdemeanors. It is reported that he is appealing this conviction. Sarah pleaded guilty to federal immigration charges and a Colorado state charge of theft for which she was sentenced to home confinement, 48 hours of community service, five years probation, and two months in jail. According to press reports, she is expected to be deported to Saudi Arabia before the end of September 2006 upon completion of her jail time.

SAUDI REACTIONS

13. (C) In general, there have been two types of reactions by Saudis both inside the KSA and in the U.S.: religious hard-liners are calling for a boycott of U.S. products, the return of Saudi students currently studying in the U.S., and the cessation of future scholarships to the U.S. Moderates and liberals are citing the treatment of Homaidan Al-Turki as an isolated case that calls for increased communication and understanding on all sides. Very few Saudis believe that Homaidan Al-Turki sexually assaulted, much less raped, his Indonesian maid. Instead, they tend to agree with the claim by one of Homaidan's defense attorneys that the FBI induced the Indonesian maid to charge Homaidan with sexual assault and rape. Saudis believe that the FBI's motive in doing this was because it had been unsuccessful in charging Homaidan with terrorism.

14. (C) On September 5, PolOff met with Khaled M. bin Taleb, who claimed to be a longtime, close friend of Homaidan. Taleb categorically refused to believe that Homaidan had sexually assaulted or raped the Indonesian maid because he knows Homaidan as a "devout and good person" who could "never sexually assault anyone." He said that he personally knows, and that it is widely known by many Saudis in the U.S. and in the KSA, that Homaidan is a "good Muslim" who helps the unfortunate and needy. Taleb said that he had last met Homaidan in person in 2003 at Homaidan's house in Springfield, Virginia. Taleb said that "even if King Abdullah swore that Homaidan had sexually assaulted this

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Indonesian maid, no one would believe it." Taleb stated that because it is simply inconceivable that a person like Homaidan could have committed sexual assault, many Saudis now feel that no Saudi is safe from the USG. However, Taleb did believe that Homaidan and his wife Sarah had mistreated the maid by keeping her passport, failing to renew her passport and visa, not paying her salary, and perhaps beating her and restricting her freedom of movement. (NOTE: Such treatment of foreign domestic workers, as well as the lack of legal protections, continues to be problematic in the Kingdom and is highlighted in our annual Trafficking in Persons Report. END NOTE.)

15. (S/NF) Taleb claimed that many Saudis know Homaidan and are very disappointed by how the USG treated him. He said that Saudis like Americans as people and U.S. culture, but have turned against the current Administration because of the treatment of Arabs and Muslims following September 11 -- especially Saudis studying and working in the U.S. -- the perception that the USG unconditionally supports the Government of Israel, the invasion of Iraq, and USG actions against the Palestinians and Lebanon. While Taleb said that many Saudis are counting on the conviction being overturned on appeal, he expressed concern that, if this conviction stands, animosity toward the USG could be inflamed to the point of acts of violence, even terrorism, in the U.S. or against Americans in the KSA or elsewhere.

COMMENT

16. (C) The Al-Turki case represents the latest cause celebre for radical Saudis claiming USG persecution of Muslims. Unfortunately, it appears that they have achieved some success in undermining efforts by the SAG and USG to bridge cultural differences and build mutual understanding. Al-Turki's friends, family, and colleagues are rallying around him, insisting that it is completely implausible that he could have committed such heinous acts -- despite his conviction in a court of law. At the same time, this case

shows just how far the Saudis still have to go when it comes to issues relating to trafficking in persons and the treatment of foreign domestic workers. Even the general Saudi public, which does not know Homaïdan personally, believes that the USG has mistreated him. There has been little, if any, focus on the victim, who is a "non-person" at the bottom of the Saudi hierarchy. One must wonder how different the general attitude toward Homaïdan and his prosecution would be if the victim had been a Saudi woman instead of one of the "other women" who do not enjoy the protections afforded by the tribal/clan structure. END
COMMENT.
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